1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

sister officiated at one of these rites which I witnessed. 844
Later, on the same day, there is again the playful fighting between the women of opposite moieties. At the birth of the infant Murri in Ambwa the Eagle women of that village came to Lesu, three miles away, to indulge in this playful fighting with the wife of the new mother's brother, i.e. her sister-in-law. Also Hawk women from the more distant village of Libba came to Ambwa to fight playfully with the Eagle women there.

During the first day of his life the infant will become 844
betrothed. If the newly-born infant is a girl, the mother of 584
some boy of the opposite moiety will come up and "mark" the infant as the future wife of her son. No ritual is concerned with the "marking," the native name for which is *disirani*. The prospective mother-in-law merely announces the betrothal, and later brings a piece of baked taro, which she has chewed first, and gives it to the infant. If the newly-born infant is a boy, the father of some girl will "mark" him as the future husband of his daughter. The infant betrothal of female infants seems to be more common than it is for male infants, and Murri was not betrothed. The parents of the infant never object. As a matter of fact, the infant's father usually knows nothing about it until after it is over, as he is not present in the house just after the birth. When he does come in his wife tells him who has "marked" the child. As will be seen later, quite frequently this infant betrothal is not consummated in marriage, and both parties take other mates.

On the day of the birth, or on the following day, should 844
the baby have been born late in the day, a distribution of 851
coconuts and taro takes place. At the birth of the infant Murri this feast was held the day after his birth. A large group of women from Ambwa and Lesu were assembled for the feast. The Lesu women walked to Ambwa, and as they neared the village, moving in single file on the narrow

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

mask) and to put it on and scare the *gas*. The boy does this and the *gas* runs down into a hole in the ground. The man and his son then stick a branch of a tree down the hole and they go back to the village. Later the *gas* comes up from the hole, eats the tree and returns to the bush.

These tales are but samples of the many which are told to the children. Obedience of children to parents, the breaking of the incest taboo, the taboo against intercourse for a woman during the period when she is nursing her child, the revolt of a child, the punishment of the woman who ate her husband's fish, an encounter of a man with his *gas* (or double) are a few of the many themes to which the children listen. And the children know their tales. In recording them, I found that the children could tell them as well as the adults. Thus, although the children learn the pattern of behaviour among adults through observations, it is also impressed upon them by folk-tales and myths. This part of their education is not dependent on the parents, or any other members of the immediate family; it is the village or community which is the school. The children may hear the tales around the fires in their own compound, but they are also sure to hear them once a year at the communal folk-tale telling period.

BETROTHAL CUSTOMS

During this same period of childhood a girl is betrothed. It has already been told how an infant was "marked" or betrothed on the day of her birth by the mother of a boy. But, very frequently, this betrothal is not consummated in marriage. By the time the girl has reached the age of marriage, the boy may already be married and have no desire for another wife; or he may have died, or gone away to work,[1]

[1] To-day, with boys away working on other islands, and the tendency toward monogamy, this infant betrothal has little chance of consummation.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

584 or it may be that another man fancies her and has made the betrothal arrangements.

584 431 All the little girls of the village are betrothed. If it is not an infant betrothal, another one is arranged later, probably when the girl is five, six, or seven years old, to a boy who is in his teens. The man first broaches the subject to the girl's maternal uncle, who in turn discusses it with her mother; then they talk it over with the rest of their clan relatives. If he is accepted, he makes presents of food, tobacco, betel-nut (and to-day the introduced loin-cloths also) to the girl and her clan relatives, and throughout her childhood, or until the marriage takes place. (Should the original betrothal of infancy hold, that man will make the presents.) [554] The presents are given when the betrothal is assured and informally from then up to marriage. There is no stipulated amount, but the more the man gives, the greater his prestige. The betrothed man also works in the gardens of his future wife's relatives. If they live in the same hamlet, the girl at infrequent intervals gives her betrothed some baked taro, but should he come from another hamlet, she is too shy to take the food to him, so one or both of her parents carry some taro which she has baked to him. A man who stands in the relationship of preferred mate (her mother's father's sister's son) also makes frequent gifts to her, even if she is betrothed to someone else and, as we have noted, the kinship term between these two is that for husband and wife. The girl and her betrothed do not eat together until after the marriage rites, nor is there ever any demonstration of affection between them; instead, there is a shyness and restraint.

584 In the past, I was told, it was customary for the girl to go and live with her intended husband's mother for a period before the marriage. The man, of course, would at that time be sleeping in the men's house. There may have been (although I am not sure) some connection between this procedure and making certain that the girl remained a

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

virgin until her marriage. The practice is not now continued (I was told it was never very rigorously enforced), and the girl now remains at her parents' home until the marriage rites. 584

Sometimes, to-day, the young man is absent from the village on another island, or in the white man's capital. Under these conditions he sends presents to her and her relatives, and the marriage takes place when his work time has expired, which may mean that the girl remains unwed for a year or so after she has reached puberty. If the man is in the village, the marriage rites are held just after her first menses. Should the betrothal take place when the girl is older, that is near puberty or past it, the man will first ask her, or find out whether she is willing, then he will go to her clan relatives for permission to marry. This might happen in case of a widow, or *divorcée*, or even in the case of a young unmarried and betrothed girl, should another man fancy her. In the latter case a girl may marry another man, even though betrothed to someone else. The usual rule, however, is for the girl's first marriage to be arranged when she is too young either to object or give her consent. If she did protest, the objections would be heeded, but a child of six is not likely to object to being betrothed, particularly when it means a succession of presents, and when every other little girl of her village is also betrothed to some older man. However, when the time comes for the marriage, there is no compulsion should the girl prefer another man.

Sometimes, too, the initiative is not taken by the man. Bak, a girl of ten, is betrothed to Terapae, a man of about twenty from Tabar, who is now working on a plantation near Kavieng. Bak's adopted mother, Brakko, arranged this betrothal, suggesting it to Terapae's maternal uncle, who in turn talked to Terapae about it. Now he sends frequent gifts to Brakko.

Here is how Tomerae became betrothed the second time.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

584 Tomerae is a married man from the bush village of Lenopil. He came to the beach village of Lesu, and while there he was told that another man wanted to marry his wife. Tomerae agreed, and accepted the return of his marriage payment.

Several Lesu people now suggested to him that he marry Pakamus, a young girl who had been betrothed, but whose intended husband had recently choked to death over a fish-bone. To this suggestion Tomerae at first said "No," more from coyness or shyness than from unwillingness. A little later he returned to his bush village, and on the way passed the garden where Pakamus' mother was working. He stopped and cleared some ground for her, to indicate that he was willing to marry her daughter. The mother, however, asked him directly, and he replied "Yes."

He continued to Lenopil, and when he arrived there told his clan relatives that he wanted all his pigs and *tsera*, which they had been holding for him. To questions from his relatives, he replied that he was going to marry a girl from the village of Lesu. They wanted to know what was wrong with the bush girls. He said he did not want any of them and had determined to marry Pakamus from Lesu. So he collected his property, returned to Lesu, and married Pakamus.

858 861 We have observed the preparation of the child for adult life; the discipline he undergoes; his gradual knowledge of and participation in adult activities; his play; the beginning of kinship patterns; his instructions in folklore, and, in general, his education. We have noted the age-grouping of boys in play, but no similar grouping of girls.

We find in Lesu no childhood world completely separated from the adult one, nor one with different ideals. Instead we find the children always observers or minor participants of the adult society. As soon as they are able to toddle, the children learn the line of sex division in social life. At all rites, and in social life, the boys are with the men and the

5: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1932 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

Other Customs centering about Food

There are various interesting customs which center around food apart from feasts or family meals. These may just be mentioned here as showing the important sociological rôle of food. Betrothal is consummated by the girl preparing some food for the man and their sitting down with the basket of food between them and eating together. In many folk-tales, when we are told that a man and a woman, or a man and two women, sit down and eat together, this expresses the fact that they are married. A woman never eats with her lover.

The remains of food are connected with black magic, and so one is careful never to leave any left-overs about.

Even the ghosts are concerned with food. After a successful fishing expedition a half taro and a small piece of fish is left on the liga for the ghosts of dead clan ancestors whose aid has been asked in fishing magic.

The prohibition of certain foods on particular occasions is the essential part of several taboos. The most important of these is the taboo against eating taro for certain relatives of a dead person over a prescribed period of mourning. During pregnancy a woman may not eat a certain fish. This is one with many bones, and it is thought that they would hurt the embryo child. A pregnant woman will be given a half of a baked taro by a woman who has had children. The latter eats the other half, and this act is believed to insure a successful delivery of the infant.

Food is the most frequent form of gift between husband and wife, between mother's brother and his nephew or niece, between brother and sister, and between friends. It is also an invariable mark of hospitality to offer food to a stranger.

Social Function

From the preceding description it is obvious that feasts in this society have other functions beside the satisfaction of physical hunger. Sometimes there is more than one feast in a day and the men then eat as a duty rather than because they are hungry. One day there were three feasts in near-by hamlets, and all attended by the same men. Two were connected with death rites, and one was to mark the occasion of an infant's cutting his first tooth. By the time the third feast was reached, the men were not hungry, but all ate.

Even the family meal, which has the very definite physiological function of satisfying hunger, has also the sociological rôle of uniting the various members. In a similar way the sentiments binding the society together are given collective expression at the feasts, although the very strong line of sex